

# **Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Project Monthly Update**

May 1 - 31, 2008

The following is a summary of Mexican wolf reintroduction project activities in Arizona on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests (ASNF) and in New Mexico on the Apache National Forest (ANF) and Gila National Forest (GNF), collectively known as the Blue Range Wolf Reintroduction Area (BRWRA). Additional information can be obtained by calling (928) 339-4329 or toll free at 888-459-9653, or by visiting the Arizona Game and Fish Department Web site at <http://www.azgfd.gov/wolf> or by visiting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Web site at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/mexicanwolf>. Past updates may be viewed on either Web site, or interested parties may sign up to receive this update electronically by visiting <http://www.azgfd.gov/signup>. This update is a public document and information in it can be used for any purpose. The reintroduction project is a multi-agency cooperative effort among the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD), New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF), USDA Forest Service (USFS), USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services (USDA APHIS WS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the White Mountain Apache Tribe (WMAT) located on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation (FAIR). Other entities cooperate through the Adaptive Management Work Group (AMWG) that meets quarterly in Arizona and/or New Mexico, including private individuals, organizations and tribes.

To view the weekly wolf telemetry flight location information or the 3-month wolf distribution map, please visit <http://www.azgfd.gov/wolf>. On the home page, go to the "Wolf Location Information" heading on the right side of the page near the top and scroll to the specific location information you seek.

**Please report any wolf sightings or suspected livestock depredations to:** (928) 339-4329 or toll free at 888-459-9653. To report incidents of take or harassment of wolves, please call the AGFD 24-hour dispatch (Operation Game Thief) at 800-352-0700.

**Numbering System:** Mexican wolves are given an identification number recorded in an official studbook that tracks their history. Capital letters (M = Male, F = Female) preceding the number indicate adult animals 24 months or older. Lower case letters (m = male, f = female) indicate wolves younger than 18 months or pups. The capital letter "A" preceding the letter and number indicate alpha wolves.

**Definitions:** For the purposes of the Monthly Update, a "wolf pack" is defined as two or more wolves that maintain an established home range. The Interagency Field Team (IFT) recognizes that wolves without radio telemetry collars may also form packs. If the IFT confirms that wolves are associating with each other and are resident within the same home range, they will be referenced as a pack.

## **CURRENT POPULATION STATUS**

At the end of May, the collared population consisted of 20 wolves with functional radio collars dispersed among 10 packs. Other uncollared wolves are known to be associating with wolves having radio collars, as well as being separate from known packs.

Seasonal note: Wolf pups are generally born between mid-April and mid-May. The IFT has been actively monitoring wolf packs during the past months to determine if females are denning in order to document wild-born pups and estimate their survival. Based on location information from the last six weeks, the IFT has documented denning behavior for the following packs: Hawks Nest, Paradise, Rim, Bacho, Dark Canyon, Middle Fork, Fox Mountain and possibly San Mateo.

## **IN ARIZONA:**

### **Bluestem Pack (collared AF521, AM806 and F1042)**

Throughout May, the IFT located the Bluestem pack in their traditional territory on the ASNF and the FAIR. The IFT has not documented denning behavior for this pack.

### **Hawks Nest Pack (collared M1044 and AF1110)**

Throughout May, the IFT located the Hawks Nest pack in their traditional territory on the ASNF. The IFT believes that this pack has initiated denning behavior based on location data.

### **Paradise Pack (collared AM795)**

The IFT located AM795 in and around the pack's traditional home range in proximity to Greens Peak throughout May. The IFT documented denning behavior for this pack and observed at least two pups near the den site.

### **Rim Pack (collared AF858 and AM1107)**

Throughout May, the IFT located the Rim pack within their traditional home range in the central portion of the ASNF and briefly on the SCAR. The IFT documented denning behavior for this pack and observed at least four pups at the den site in late April.

### **M619 (collared)**

The IFT located M619 in the central and northern portions of the ASNF and ANF in Arizona and New Mexico during May.

## **ON THE FAIR:**

### **Bacho Pack (collared AM990)**

Throughout May, the IFT located AM990 on the FAIR. The IFT documented denning behavior for this pack based on location data.

### **Lofer Pack (collared AF1056)**

Throughout May, the IFT located AF1056 on the FAIR. The IFT has not documented denning behavior for this pack.

## **IN NEW MEXICO:**

### **Dark Canyon (collared AM992 and AF923)**

Throughout May, the IFT located the Dark Canyon pack in their traditional territory in the west-

central portion of the GNF. The IFT documented denning behavior for this pack based on location data.

#### **Luna Pack (collared AM583 and uncollared AF562)**

Throughout the beginning of May, the IFT located the Luna pack within their traditional territory in the west-central portion of the GNF. However, the carcass of AM583 was located and collected on May 13, leaving no collared individuals remaining in this pack. The IFT is currently searching for sign of the remainder of the Luna pack in order to deploy a new collar on a remaining pack member.

#### **Middle Fork Pack (collared AM871, AF861 and F1115)**

The IFT located the pack on and adjacent to the northern portion of the Gila Wilderness and central portion of the GNF throughout May. The IFT documented denning behavior for this pack based on location data.

#### **San Mateo Pack (collared AF903 and AM1114)**

Throughout May, the IFT located the pack in the east-central portion of the ANF. The IFT suspects that this pack has denned, but further monitoring is required for confirmation.

#### **Fox Mountain Pack (collared AM1038 and AF1111)**

The IFT continued to locate the Fox Mountain pack in the northwestern portion of the ANF in May. The IFT documented denning behavior for this pack based on location data.

#### **Elk Mountain Pack (collared AM1045)**

Throughout May, the IFT continued to search unsuccessfully for AM1045. It is considered “fate unknown,” but is presumed to be alive.

### **MORTALITIES**

On May 13, the IFT located the carcass of Luna pack AM583. Members of the IFT and law enforcement agents investigated the scene and collected the carcass for necropsy.

### **INCIDENTS**

In total, members of the IFT investigated two potential livestock injuries and seven potential depredations in May. Of the seven depredation investigations, two were confirmed as wolf depredations, one was confirmed as a black bear depredation, one died of natural causes, and cause of death was unknown in three cases. Of the two livestock injuries, one was confirmed as wolf-caused and the other was confirmed as coyote-caused.

On May 6, members of the IFT investigated a potential wolf-caused injury to a cow in Catron County, New Mexico. This cow was involved in the incident reported on April 27 that included a confirmed coyote depredation of a calf. Members of the public witnessed the attack and reported that the cow in question had been bitten on the neck and chest by the canids defending the calf they had killed. Bite marks measured by IFT personnel on the cow were consistent with bite marks measured on the calf, indicating that the injuries were inflicted by coyotes.

On May 7, members of the IFT located a dead cow and a dead yearling on the FAIR in the same general area as the depredation incidents that were investigated on April 29 and 30. After investigation, both were confirmed as wolf depredations and were considered one depredation incident. The depredation incident was assigned to the same two uncollared wolves that were assigned the depredation incidents from April 29 and 30. Thus, this is the third depredation incident assigned to these wolves. Management efforts are ongoing to trap and collar these wolves, and the IFT is working with the livestock operator in order to reduce the possibility of future depredations.

On May 12, members of the IFT received a report of nuisance wolf behavior near a residence in Catron County. Members of the IFT investigated the site and confirmed that tracks located were in fact from a single wolf. No collared wolves were known to be in the area. The IFT responded by searching the area during the subsequent weeks for further sign of uncollared wolves.

On May 13, members of the IFT located two dead cows in close proximity to each other in Catron County. Members of the IFT investigated both carcasses on May 14 and determined that one died of natural causes because it was tangled in barb wire. The second cow had been dead for several weeks and was considered to have died of unknown causes following investigation.

On May 15, a report was received of a potential wolf depredation in Catron County. Members of the IFT investigated the site the same day and determined that the depredation was a confirmed black bear depredation.

On May 16, a report was received of a dead cow on the FAIR near the previous depredation incidents that were investigated on April 29 and 30. Members of the IFT investigated the scene and determined that the cow had died several weeks prior to the discovery of its remains. The IFT determined that the cause of death was unknown.

On May 19, the IFT investigated a report made the same day of a potential wolf depredation of a calf in Catron County. Upon investigation, only bones of the calf were located. Due to lack of evidence the cause of death was considered unknown.

On May 21, a report was received of a calf that was believed to have been injured by wolves in Catron County on May 17 in the same general area as the nuisance wolf report on May 12. Members of the IFT investigated on May 22 and determined that the injuries were consistent with a wolf attack. However, because the calf has not died, a depredation incident has not been assigned. There were no known collared individuals in the area of the attack site.

On May 26, a second report of nuisance wolf behavior was reported at the same residence as the report on May 12 in Catron County. Members of the IFT investigated the scene and determined that tracks found were probable wolf tracks. The IFT continued to search for additional sign of uncollared wolves in the area.

## **CAPTIVE MANAGEMENT**

On May 8, the IFT returned F1028 to the Sevilleta Wolf Management Facility following removal for veterinary attention.

On May 15, the IFT captured F836 at the Ladder Ranch Wolf Management Facility in order to perform an annual exam, which included a brief veterinary checkup and administration of vaccines.

## **COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION**

The IFT continued to communicate and coordinate with members of the public and livestock operators, including the initiation of range rider programs for proactive depredation prevention. The IFT delivered no public programs during May.

## **PROJECT PERSONNEL**

There were no changes in project personnel in May.

## **REWARDS OFFERED**

The USFWS is offering a reward of up to \$10,000, the AGFD Operation Game Thief is offering a reward of up to \$1,000 and the NMDGF is offering a reward of up to \$1,000 for information leading to the conviction of the individual(s) responsible for the shooting deaths of Mexican wolves. A variety of non-governmental organizations and private individuals have pledged an additional \$33,000 for a total reward amount of up to \$45,000, depending on the information provided.

Individuals with information they believe may be helpful are urged to call one of the following agencies: USFWS special agents in Mesa, AZ, at (480) 967-7900, in Alpine, AZ, at (928) 339-4232, or in Albuquerque, NM, at (505) 346-7828; the WMAT at (928) 338-1023 or (928) 338-4385; AGFD Operation Game Thief at 1-800-352-0700; or NMDGF Operation Game Thief at 1-800-432-4263. Killing a Mexican wolf is a violation of the Federal Endangered Species Act, and can result in criminal penalties of up to \$50,000 and/or not more than one year in jail, and/or a civil penalty of up to \$25,000.